There are over 300 turtle species worldwide, including roughly 60 types of tortoise and 7 sea turtle species. Turtles are found on every continent except Antarctica, living in a variety of climates from the tropical regions of Central and South America through the temperate parts of the U.S., with a few species in southern Canada.

The vast majority of turtles spend much of their lives in freshwater ponds, lakes and rivers. Although they are in the same family with North American pond and river turtles, box turtles of the U.S. and Mexico are primarily terrestrial.

Tortoises are primarily terrestrial with different habitat and diet requirements and are covered in a separate care sheet.

Western painted turtle. Painted turtles occur throughout the U.S. A medium-sized pond turtle, this species gets its name from its colorful markings.

A small to medium-sized aquarium (20-29 gallons) is ample for one adult of a smaller species (e.g., mud, musk). Larger species ( sliders, cooters) may need tanks 100 gallons and larger.

★ Increase your tank size if you are housing multiple adults or species.

★ Active swimmers such as painted turtles need a larger tank with deeper areas; mud turtles are bottom crawlers and water 6-8 inches deep works well.
Aquatic Turtle Diet

★ Supplement commercial pellets with preferred food items, for example, carnivorous mud turtles appreciate earthworms, snails, mealworms, and crickets; adult cooters should be fed aquatic plants and leafy green vegetables.

★ Hatchlings and juveniles may have different food requirements than adults; young painted turtles are more carnivorous than adults while the opposite is true for map turtles.

★ Avoid feeding too much protein, which can cause shell deformities.

★ Use calcium supplements appropriate for your species.

Quality prepared and natural turtle foods. Mealworms supplement carnivorous diets; Romaine, kale, carrots, zucchini and green beans are choices for herbivorous turtles. A calcium supplement is important for shell and bone development. Avoid too much protein.

Avoiding Human Illness

Reptiles, including turtles, may have bacteria, such as Salmonella, that cause disease in humans. Taking these precautions will help keep you healthy when handling reptiles:

✔ Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after handling reptiles or anything in their habitat.

✔ Avoid close facial contact with your turtle.

✔ Never bring your turtle into food-preparation areas. Do not clean turtle habitats or anything in their habitats where food is prepared. If you clean the habitat in the bathroom, disinfect the area completely afterwards.

Aquatic turtles are not appropriate in homes with children under 5, pregnant women, senior citizens and persons with weakened immune systems, due to the increased risk of severe complications from salmonellosis. For more information, visit CDC’s Healthy Pets website:

https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets
### Popular pet turtle care chart. Consult with your retailer for information for your species.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name (Genus name)</th>
<th>Adult Size</th>
<th>Minimum Enclosure</th>
<th>Diet</th>
<th>Water Temperature</th>
<th>Basking Area Temperature</th>
<th>Behavior Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painted turtle (<em>Chrysemys</em> species)</td>
<td>6 - 8”</td>
<td>40 gal (1 adult)</td>
<td>Omnivorous</td>
<td>75° - 80°F</td>
<td>85°F—90°F</td>
<td>Excellent swimmers need up to 30 inches water depth; larger basking area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map turtle (<em>Graptemys</em> species)</td>
<td>5” male 11” female</td>
<td>Varies by species; 30-75 gal (1 male), 75-125 gal (1 female)</td>
<td>Omnivorous; adults primarily carnivorous; calcium supplements recommended</td>
<td>75° - 80°F</td>
<td>85°F—95°F</td>
<td>River species, need space &amp; water depth; larger basking area to dry completely;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooters (<em>Pseudemys</em> species)</td>
<td>13”</td>
<td>100 gal (1 adult); outdoor pond recommended</td>
<td>Omnivorous; riverine species adults primarily herbivorous</td>
<td>70°– 75°F</td>
<td>~85°F</td>
<td>Excellent swimmers need space and deeper water; larger basking area to dry completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sliders (<em>Trachemys</em> species)</td>
<td>12”</td>
<td>75-150 gal (1 adult)</td>
<td>Omnivorous; adults primarily herbivorous</td>
<td>75° - 85°F</td>
<td>85°F—90°F</td>
<td>Excellent swimmers need ample space and deeper water; larger basking area with logs, structure leading into water</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

★ The sale of pet turtles with a carapace (top of shell) length less than 4 inches is prohibited by federal regulations.
★ Because of slow growth and delayed maturity, conservation agencies are concerned that turtle populations have been depleted and restrictions are in place for many species. Check with your state conservation or natural resources agency regarding your choice of pet aquatic turtle.

![Habitattitude ™](https://www.pijac.org)

Do not release your pet into the environment. If you are unable to care for your turtle, check the Habitattitude™ website for options to re-home your pet.